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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 002394

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [FR](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: APRIL 7 LARSEN MEETINGS WITH FRENCH OFFICIALS  
FOCUS ON LEBANON ELECTIONS, NEXT STEPS

REF: A. PARIS 2243

[1](#)B. PARIS 2305 (EXDIS NOTAL)

[1](#)C. BEIRUT 1092

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons  
1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: French Elysee and MFA officials reported that UN Envoy Larsen, during April 7 meetings in Paris, emphasized the absolute centrality of holding Lebanon's elections on schedule, for which he proposed creation of a 10-12 member committee composed equally of opposition and loyalists to reach agreement on the electoral law and election date. Larsen also stressed the need to look at post-election international assistance to Lebanon and floated the idea of an international task force to coordinate security, economic and institutional assistance. French officials were cautious on the latter idea, and stressed the need to wait to hear the views of an elected Lebanese government and avoid creating international tutelage over Lebanon or a cumbersome coordination mechanism. On Lebanon's internal situation, Larsen noted that increased nervousness among pro-Syria loyalists is leading them to look for new alliances, and expressed concern over lack of unity and an emergent leader among the opposition. Larsen also suggested creation of a small team of two to four people to verify, but not certify, the Syrian withdrawal, an idea fully supported by the GoF. Larsen and MFA officials discussed a possible third UNSCR on Lebanon, with both sides open to the idea. French officials also reported that Larsen was reluctant to contact Danish FM Moeller to urge him to cancel planned visits to Beirut and Damascus, and preferred that the U.S. and France take the lead; FM Barnier was scheduled to call Moeller on the issue April 7. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) UN Special Envoy for 1559 implementation Terje-Roed Larsen visited Paris April 7 to brief GoF officials on his just-completed meetings in Beirut and Damascus. We received separate readouts on Larsen's visit from Presidential Middle East Advisor Dominique Boche and MFA DAS-equivalent for the Levant Christian Jouret April 8. Jouret reported that Larsen was expected to meet with FM Barnier, but due to his late arrival in Paris April 7, he met with the minister for only about five minutes. Larsen had a working lunch with MFA Political Director Stanislas de Laboulaye, MFA A/S-equivalent for North Africa/Middle East Jean-Francois Thibault, MFA A/S-equivalent for IO Affairs Jean-Maurice Ripert, and Jouret. Larsen was later received at the Elysee by Diplomatic Advisor (NSA equivalent) Maurice Gourdault-Montagne and Boche.

[1](#)3. (C) Boche reported that Larsen emphasized two main points during his Elysee meetings: the absolute centrality of holding elections on time, and the need to think about post-election international assistance to Lebanon. On elections, Larsen said the pro-Syrian loyalists in Lebanon wanted to delay for as much as one year, and we needed to force progress to maintain the schedule. He proposed the creation of a working group committee composed of five to six oppositionists and an equal number of loyalists, to reach an understanding on the election date, and the electoral law, i.e. large or small districts. Jouret told us separately that it wasn't clear whether the working group idea was Larsen's, Jumblatt's or perhaps someone else's. Jouret added that Larsen wanted to keep the committee proposal discreet, and viewed it as a possible embryonic form of a national unity government to prepare elections. Neither Boche nor Jouret suggested GoF resistance to, or great enthusiasm over the working group idea.

[1](#)4. (C) On post-election international assistance to Lebanon, Boche noted that Larsen floated the idea of an international task force on the ground to coordinate security, economic and institutional assistance. Both Boche and Jouret suggested GoF caution on the task force proposal. Boche said the GoF stressed to Larsen that nothing was possible without the election of a new Lebanese government, and we needed to remain cautious and wait to hear what that government wanted in terms of assistance. Boche said the GoF side raised points recently made with visiting U.S. officials (refs a-b) that Lebanon was not a failed state, had a strong national tradition, and should not be under any form of international tutelage, or even a heavy coordination mechanism similar to that in place for the Palestinians. Boche said the GoF side also cautioned that international coordination on the ground

might be interpreted negatively in the region. Boche summed up that the GoF preference was for cooperation on coordinating bilateral assistance to Lebanon post-elections, vice a heavy coordination mechanism which would give the impression that the Lebanese couldn't manage on their own. Jouret quipped that the French message was that the Lebanese were not the Palestinians nor the East Timorese.

15. (C) On Lebanon's internal situation, Jouret said Larsen observed that the pro-Syrian loyalists in Lebanon were getting increasingly nervous and looking for new alliances. Bashar al-Asad was aware of the problem, and realized that "loyalists were no longer all loyal." At the same time, Larsen viewed the opposition as facing many difficulties and lacking unity, an assessment shared by the GoF. Jouret said Larsen was troubled by the non-emergence of a single, recognized leader among the opposition, which remained in disparate groups.

16. (C) Jouret noted that Larsen also spoke of the need to verify the Syrian troop and security services' withdrawal, and proposed the creation of a small team of two to four people for this purpose. Larsen wanted the verification team to remain very discreet, with no publicity, and proposed that their mission should be to verify, but not certify, the Syrian withdrawal. Jouret confirmed that the GoF fully supported the verification team proposal.

17. (C) Jouret reported that, during the working lunch, Larsen and MFA officials had discussed whether a new Lebanon UNSC resolution might be necessary, with both sides concluding, "why not?" Jouret said the possible scope of such a resolution, and whether it might focus on elections, for instance, remained to be determined. Nevertheless, the GoF was open to the idea.

18. (C) When we asked Jouret whether Larsen raised the SARG's desire to be rewarded for its Lebanon withdrawal, he confirmed that the subject did not come up. Jouret conceded that Larsen had raised the SARG's continued dismay over the poor state of its relations with France, which it wanted to resolve through dialogue. Jouret reported that the MFA response was "No way," and stressed that Larsen remained the sole international interlocutor for the SARG and GOL on these issues. On this point, Jouret confirmed that the GOF was seeking to turn off Danish FM Moeller's proposed visit to Damascus and Beirut (ref c), and had raised the issue already via its embassy in Copenhagen. Jouret said the GoF had suggested that Larsen raise the issue in a call to Moeller, however Larsen was reluctant to do so, given Norwegian-Danish sensitivities, and preferred that the U.S. and France take up the issue with the Danish FM. FM Barnier, therefore, had agreed to call Moeller and would urge him to cancel the Beirut and Damascus stops. Jouret said as of the morning of April 8, he was unsure whether the Barnier-Moeller call had taken place though it was scheduled for April 7.

LEACH